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ACTION USIA 12

INFO OCT 01, EUR 17, ACDA 16, CIAE 00, DODE 00, JPM 04, H 02, INR 07, L 03,

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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9502

C O N F I D E N T I A L WARSAW 1999

SUBJ: OPINION CONCERNING SALT

REF: STATE 102449

FOLLOWING COMMENTS RE SITUATION IN POLAND ARE PROVIDED IN
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFTEL:

1. SALT TALKS.

A. BELIEVE THERE IS GENERAL AWARENESS AMONG MOST OF POPULATION
OF IMPENDING TALKS BETWEEN US AND SOVIET UNION. KNOWLEDGE
THAT THESE TALKS CONCERN ARMS LIMITATION IS PROBABLY CLEARER
TO THAT GROUP OF "NORMALLY INFORMED PEOPLE," PARTY OFFICIALS,
INTELLECTUALS, STUDENTS, JOURNALISTS, WHO MAKE IT THEIR
BUSINESS TO FOLLOW THESE MATTERS. REACTION OF AVERAGE POLE
TO ANY TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO SUPER POWERS WOULD BE POSITIVE
BECAUSE THEY FEEL SUCH TALKS WOULD RELAX TENSION AND THUS
PROVIDE, IN THEIR MINDS, BETTER PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN THEIR
VERY UNCERTAIN REGION OF EUROPE. INFORMED POLES ALSO VIEW
TALKS AS EXTREMELY VALUABLE, EVEN "NECESSARY" FOR POLAND.
SOME GO SO FAR AS TO BELIEVE SUCH TALKS COULD CONCEIVABLY
PROMOTE SOME INTERNAL CHANGES IN THE USSR WHICH WOULD ALLEVIATE
SOVIET PRESSURE UPON POLAND, THEREBY ALLOWING POLAND TO
PURSUE MORE INDEPENDENT COURSES OF ACTION IN MANY AREAS.
THUS, SUCH OSSIERS FEEL SALT COULD GIVE POLAND CHANCE TO
PLAY OUT ROLE IT HAS LONG BEEN INTERESTED IN PLAYING -- THAT
OF AN ARBITER IN ARRANGING REDUCTION OF TENSIONS IN CENTRAL

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EUROPE THROUGH SOME FORM OF ARMS CONTROL. WHILE RAPACKI/ GOMULKA PLANS AS PRESENTED CONTAINED ELEMENTS SLANTED IN SOVIET FAVOR, THEY UNDOUBTEDLY WERE ALSO SEEN BY POLES AS CONTAINING FACTORS FAVORABLE TO POLISH NATIONAL INTEREST IN SENSE THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF MEANINGFUL REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL COULD RESULT IN LESSENING OF SOVIET PRESENCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

B. TALKS WOULD BE VIEWED HERE WITH CONSIDERABLE OPTIMISM, FOR POLES TEND TO SEE THEMSELVES WITH APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS (PARA 5), AS BENEFITTING GREATLY FROM SUCCESSFUL TALKS. CENSORED POLISH MEDIA HAS THUS FAR AFFORDED US PREPARATIONS FOR TASK RATHER STRAIGHTFORWARD AND UNBIASED COVERAGE. IT HAS ATTEMPTED TO SELL LINE THAT US DELAYED IN INITIATING TALKS BECAUSE IT PREFERRED TO NEGOTIATE FROM A "POSITION OF STRENGTH" AND IT TOOK THIS

LONG FOR PRESIDENT TO SET HIS MILITARY HOUSE IN ORDER. THERE WERE VISIBLE NOTES OF DISAPPOINTMENT FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S EARLIER ANNOUNCEMENTS RE POSTPONEMENT OF TALKS, THUS AGAIN POSSIBLY INDICATING UNEASINESS AT DELAY AND IMPORTANCE POLES ATTACH TO THESE TALKS.

C. WHILE THE INFORMED AND OFFICIAL OPINION WOULD FAVOR US- USSR ARMS REDUCTIONS, IT WOULD ACCEPT "FREEZE" AT PRESENT LEVELS IF THIS FOLLOWED BY FURTHER STEPS TO EASE INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS, INCLUDING SOME VARIANT AT LEAST OF POLISH REGIONAL ARMS REDUCTION PROPOSALS. WE FEEL PRIVATE POLISH CITIZEN HOWEVER, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY PREFER THAT US MAINTAIN SOME SUPERIORITY IN ARMS OVER USSR.

2. PEACE IMAGE.

A. WHILE PUBLIC OPINION APPEARS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT FACT US SINCERELY TRYING TO EASE WORLD TENSIONS, IT CONTINUES TO BE INFLUENCED STRONGLY BY OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA REGARDING US ROLE IN VIET NAME. OPINION THEREFORE WOULD TEND TO FEEL THAT US COULD DO MORE AND ACTUALLY HOPES THAT US WOULD TAKE

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INITIATIVE AND BE MORE FORTHCOMING IN EFFORTS TO EASE TENSIONS.

B. US PEACE IMAGE IN POLAND UNDOUBTEDLY BETTER THAN THAT OF USSR. HISTORICALLY, OF COURSE, THERE IS DEEPLY SEATED DISTRUST OF RUSSIA IN POLAND, A FEELING WHICH WE CONSIDER IS STILL VERY STRONG AMONG POLISH POPULATION TODAY. WHILE US IMAGE IS SOMEWHAT TARNISHED BY INVOLVEMENT IN VIET-NAM, POLES ALL TOO CONSCIOUS OF FACT LARGE NUMBERS OF SOVIET TROOPS STATIONED IN POLAND, 1956 INVASION OF HUNGARY AND AUGUST 1968 INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THIS RECORD CERTAINLY HAS NOT HELPED TO IMPROVE SOVIET "PEACE IMAGE."

C. US PEACE IMAGE WOULD DEFINITELY BE ENHANCED BY ITS PARTICIPATION IN SALT TALKS, AS IT HAS BEEN BY PARTICIPATION IN PARIS TALKS ON VIET-NAM.

3. STRENGTH IMAGE.

A. INFORMED OPINION AND PRIVATE POLES TEND TO FEEL THAT US IS MILITARILY STRONGER THAN USSR. OFFICIAL PARTY PROPAGANDA, HOWEVER, MAKES THE US-USSR APPEAR ABOUT EQUAL.

B. WHILE THE THEORY OF "MUTUAL NUCLEAR DETERRENCE" IS VAGUELY APPRECIATED LOCALLY, WE FEEL THIS THEORY IS DIFFICULT FOR MOST POLES TO GRASP. THEY SEE POLAND AS SMALL NATIONAL IN STORM CENTER OF EUROPEAN POLITICS WHICH MORE LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED, INITIALLY AT LEAST, IN CONVENTIONAL MILITARY ACTION. SINCE THEORY OF "MUTUAL DETERRENCE" DID NOT DETER US FROM INVOLVEMENT IN VIET-NAM NOR SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN HUNGARY OR CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THERE WOULD BE SOME QUESTION IN MIND OF AVERAGE POLE AS TO EXACTLY WHAT REAL EFFECT THEORY OF MUTUAL DETERRENCE WOULD HAVE IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN AFFAIRS.

4. WHILE LOCAL MEDIA AND PARTY PROPAGANDA HAVE COME DOWN HARD ON INCREASED US EXPENDITURES TO DEVELOP AND CONSTRUCT ABM SYSTEM, GENERAL AWARENESS THIS SUBJECT PROBABLY LIMITED TO "INFORMED" SEGMENT OF SOCIETY. THIS SEGMENT WOULD PROBABLY VIEW DIVERSION OF FUNDS TO OTHER PROJECTS, I.E., TO COMBAT POVERTY IN US ETC., AS BEING MORE WORTHWHILE AND AS CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTING MORE TO EASING OF WORLD TENSIONS.

US DOMESTIC PROBLEMS SUCH AS RIOTS ON CAMPUSES, FLIGHT OF NEGROES, ETC. PUBLICIZED EXTENSIVELY BY LOCAL MEDIA AND

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THEREFORE, EVEN GENERAL PUBLIC AWARE TO SOME DEGREE OF PROJECTS ON WHICH THEY FEEL ABM FUNDS COULD BE BETTER SPENT. AT SAME TIME, CONTROLLED PRESS, OF COURSE, NEVER MENTIONS SOVIET ABM DEVELOPMENTS, SO THAT IMPRESSION IS GIVEN THAT US IS COUNTRY TAKING INITIATIVE IN SUCH ACTIVITIES AS ABM'S, MIRV'S, ETC.

5. SOME WELL-INFORMED POLES REGARD SALT AS IMPORTANT COMPLEMENT TO NPT AND TO EFFORTS OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES TO PUSH EUROPEAN SECURITY CONFERENCE (ESC). RE LATTER SUBJECT, WE HAVE NOTED CONCERN ON PART OF A FEW POLISH OBSERVERS THAT SALT MAY LEAD TO AGREEMENT BETWEEN SUPER POWERS WHICH COULD CONCEIVABLY WORK TO DETRIMENT OF SMALLER COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE, IN SENSE THAT SALT COULD RESULT IN DEAL ON US-SOVIET "SPHERES OF INFLUENCE," LEAVING POLAND AND HER NEIGHBORS PERMANENTLY UNDER SOVIET DOMINATION. TO COUNTER SUCH A POSSIBILITY, THOSE POLES WHO THINK ABOUT SUCH MATTERS - AND THEIR NUMBER IS NOT INSIGNIFIANT - MAY SEE ESC AS, INTER ALIA, WAY OF ENSURING THAT SMALLER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE VOICE IN CONTRIBUTING TO SOLUTION OF THOSE EUROPEAN SECURITY PROBLEMS WHICH COULD BE AFFECTED BY SALT.

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